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Querido hermano:

Yo iba a llamar al número de teléfono que me diste para informarte de que no iba yo a visitarte, pero el hombre en la oficina del correo me aseguró que te alcanzaría dentro de dos días la carta "express" que te envié; espero que lo hiciese. En cualquier caso, lamento cualquier molestia que yo te causase, y ruego que me la perdones.

I'd like to make some comments on my reasons for hating our parents. First I'll quote some passages from a letter that mother sent me about Christmas time, 1984.

"All families have their fights. ... But most of us are able to forgive...."

"[Your hatred] I think, I am convinced, has its source in your traumatic hospital experience in your first year of life." ...

"Somehow you were never able to overcome that embedded distrust of the people around you."

I could quote some other accusations from that letter, but the above I think is enough to make the point. Which is, that our parents will not accept any blame for the way they treated me during my teens. Any resentment I have toward them they attribute to there being something wrong with me. "That hospital experience" that mother always likes

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to dredge up is very convenient for them ②
because it's something that was beyond their
control. Of course, if my resentment of them was
caused by that experience, then it remains to be
explained why I never resented them before my
teens. (By the way, I don't know how severe
"that hospital experience" actually was, but it's a
safe bet that mother's account of it is considerably
exaggerated — you know how she always does
exaggerate whenever she is emotionally involved in
something, and Dad will generally back her up
against any third party.)

When she mentions "fights" in the first
passage quoted above she is referring to my
complaints about their having applied to me
such epithets as "another Walter Teszewski",
"a creep", "sick", "mind of a two-year-old",
etc. The term "fight" here is hardly appropriate,
since it implies some sort of rough equality
of power between the 2 combatants. If a
200-lb. bully beats up a 120-pounder you
don't call that a fight, it's just abuse. The
same applies when parents shout the most
cutting sort of insults at a 14 or 15-year old
kid who is in their power. It is easy for <u>them</u> to
talk about forgiveness — they don't have much to
forgive, since they always won what they choose to
call the "fights"; they finished them by sending me up
to the attic or by shouting "speak respectfully to
your parents or we'll throw you out of the house."
Mother's calling these things "fights" is one of her

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typical evasions and an illustration of our parents' self-righteousness. They will admit to having "made a mistake" and things of that sort, but they never will admit the real reasons for their behavior toward me: first, that they were too lazy to make the effort needed to exercise self-restraint; second, they evidently had certain frustrations or irritabilities, and I was a convenient target on which they could vent these. In later years, if they had felt and expressed a real sense of remorse and regret about these things I probably would have forgiven them. But as you can see from the passages I quoted above, their self-righteousness is incorrigible. Far from having any sense of having been in the wrong, they attribute all problems to there being something wrong with me.

Actually, about 3 years ago after I'd written them on the subject, mother did write back: "We are truly sorry to have been such failures as parents" (But isn't there a hint there of something like, "we are truly sorry you turned out so rotten"?) But even then she tried to excuse it on the

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grounds of "ignorance". (They can ④
hardly have been ignorant of the fact that it is extremely painful for a teenage kid to have his parents repeatedly tell him, in anger, that there is something wrong with him mentally.) Getting that much of an apology from her was something like squeezing a nickel out of a miser. It was cold and curt, and afterward she seemed to just shove it under the carpet and forget about it. Certainly it conveyed no sense of remorse; and very likely it was something she said merely to get me to soften towards them, since her later letter, from which I quoted above, reveals the same old self-righteous attitude. As for Dad, from him I have never had any shadow or hint of an apology.

I've brought up this subject partly to explain to you my lasting resentment toward our parents, but also partly because, in thinking about these things during the last few years, I've become more aware of the fact that the shit that I had to take

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from our parents I tended to pass on to you, so that you have somewhat the same reason to resent me as I have to resent our parents. I have already apologized to you for this, and I now repeat the apology. I very much regret having bullied and insulted you the way I often did. I wouldn't blame you if you hated my guts for it. It's an indication of the generosity of your character that you've shown very little resentment toward me.

I would note, though, that my position with respect to our parents was worse than your position with respect to me. Our parents were the last authority in the case, so that in conflicts with them I always lost. I generally ended by getting sent up to the attic where I could do nothing but sit and be gnawed by frustrated anger. You, on the other hand, in your conflicts with me could often turn to our parents for support and by that means were sometimes able to carry your point.

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I had nowhere near as much power (6)
over you as the parents had over me.
I want to emphasize that I say this
<u>not</u> to excuse or minimize the way I
sometimes abused you, but to help make
it clear to you why I have such a
deep resentment against our parents.

By the way, as long as I'm on this sort
of subject, you'll recall that exchange of
letters we had a few years ago in which I
sharply criticized the motives behind your
philosophical opinions. I naturally found it
pretty frustrating that I couldn't get you to
accept certain points that seemed so obvious
to me, especially in view of my opinion concerning
your motives for rejecting these points. As
you know, I tend to get hot and angry in
frustrating circumstances, and for that reason
my criticisms of you, though they did in a
general way represent my real opinions and
feelings, were harsher and more uncompromising
than they would have been if I'd
written them in a completely calm state. The
things I wrote then should have been softened
and qualified a good deal.

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In your ~~latest~~ next to last letter you mentioned the hypothetical possibility that your blood pressure might "shoot up again". I don't know whether this refers to that one reading of 150/95 that you got, or whether it's been higher than that, and I won't ask you about it, since it may be that, like me, you don't like being interrogated about your health. But I'll tell you about my own experience with blood pressure just in case the information might be relevant to your case.

Since a predisposition to hypertension is sometimes hereditary, about 11 years ago I thought I ought to get it checked. I tend to get tense whenever I have to keep an appointment, and furthermore, being anxious not to have a bad reading contributed to the tension. So the doctor got a reading of something-or-other over 90, the 90 being borderline. So the doctor had me lie down and relax for a minute or two and then got a reading of 80. The doctor was young and conscientious and he told me I should have my blood pressure checked every 3 months. I didn't do so, but on

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any occasion when I consulted a doctor thereafter, and they took my blood pressure, being tense I generally had a reading on the same general order as yours: 150/95, give or take a little. Figuring that I would never find out if I had a blood pressure problem getting it measured in a doctor's office where I was always tense, I bought one of those gismos for myself. Taking my own pressure at home under relaxed conditions I got, and have continued getting ever since then, systolic pressures anywhere between 115 and 145, and diastolic pressures anywhere between 77 and 86, usually about 81, which I take it is quite safe. As a check, I took my own pressure under the doctor's supervision to make sure I was doing it right. Incidentally, when I told the doctor (not the young one mentioned above but an older one) about the situation, he made a wry face and said, "Yes, that's the difference between taking it at home and taking it in the office." He seemed to think I was alright as long as my relaxed readings at home were OK. Though I've frequently been under great tension, apparently my blood pressure goes back to normal when the tension is off.

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Lately I've been reading a biography of Columbus by Samuel Eliot Morison which I find interesting. More interesting was a book I've just finished reading, A Question of Madness, by Zhores and Roy Medvedev. This book, which appeared in 1971 and refers to events that occurred in 1970, is about how the soviet authorities tried to railroad Zhores Medvedev into a mental institution for expressing opinions that certain highly-placed parties evidently found objectionable. Fortunately for Z. Medvedev, he was a well-known scientist with many friends, including apparently some fairly influential ones, both inside and outside of the Soviet Union, and there was so much protest over the affair that they let him off. According to the book, many less fortunate Russians today are shut up in the booby-hatch for exercising rights that are (theoretically) guaranteed to them by the Soviet constitution.

What was interesting to me about the book is that it seemed to indicate that the soviet system for enforcing ideological conformity is less well-organized, uniform, and intelligent than I had tended to assume. I had generally supposed that the soviet leaders, in pursuit of a fairly well-defined goal

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(namely, the survival and expansion of the communist system), had a reasonably consistent policy as to just what degree of deviation from official dogmas would be permitted, and that they had a reasonably efficient system for dealing with those who crossed the forbidden line. But the Medvedev book seems to indicate a much less simple situation. Certainly the Medvedev case was a fiasco, and makes the soviet authorities look like a bunch of bungling amateurs. (Stalin doubtless would have handled the affair much more efficiently: the knock on the door at midnight, the suspect carted off by the secret police, and never heard of again.) The authorities seem to have attempted to maintain a thin facade of legality without having a well-defined standard procedure to assure that such cases were handled successfully, so they ended up by backing down. Also, there are indications that Medvedev was not persecuted as the result of a standard policy for insuring ideological purity, but because of the jealousies of the Lysenko clique of biologists, whom he had criticized. Also, the book seems to indicate that ideological dissent in Russia is more widespread than I had supposed and that Russians are better informed about the outside world than I had thought. For instance, the author seems to indicate that, for many Russians, it is a routine matter to listen to the BBC.

You'd think that with that much "free-thinking

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(so to speak) going on, Russia would be (11)
rapidly evolving toward a freer sort of society. Yet it certainly doesn't look to me as if the situation there today is any better than it was 15 years ago when the book was written, and I know that some Russian dissidents have denied that there has been any progressive liberalization of the system since de-Stalinization. But then, I don't really know much about all this, especially since I rarely read newspapers or magazines. I'd be interested to hear what you know and what opinions you may have on this subject.

Un norteamericano y su mujer viajaban por México. Sentían un poco de hambre, y al encontrar un almacén, el hombre dijo a su esposa — "Let's stop here and get some groceries." — Pararon su automóvil, y mientras que se acercaban al almacén el hombre preguntó a la mujer, — "How do you say 'groceries' in Spanish?" — "Uh, I think it's 'groserías' or something like that" — respondió la mujer. Entraron en el almacén y el hombre dijo al propietario, hablando español con dificultad — "Quisiéramos ... unas ... groserías." — ¿Qué?"

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— respondió el propietario, asombrado.
— "Quisiéramos ... unas ... groserías" — repitió el norteamericano, tendiéndole un puñado de dinero. — "Pues" — contestó el propietario, encogiéndose los hombros y tomando el dinero — "Si quieren unas groserías, se las doy: Mierda, joder, chingar, coño, verga, etc., etc., etc. ..."

— Ted

P.S. Got your latest letter. I'm very sorry to have caused you so much inconvenience — and I'm also very embarrassed to have made such a hash of all this.

One reason why I offered to send you those copies of The Skeptical Inquirer is that a few years ago you mentioned to me a woman psychologist you saw on TV who claimed to have evidence of re-incarnation. The stuff I read in the Skeptical Inquirer, and also a book I read by Philip Klass, UFO's Identified, shows that time and again you get these very convincing stories of UFOs, psychic phenomena, etc., but when the stories are carefully investigated they always seem to be based on highly misleading information, sometimes on outright lies and deceptions. So I wouldn't take that [illegible]

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of stuff seriously unless it has been confirmed (13)
by some independent and unbiassed investig-
ators.

I take the liberty of returning your Spanish passage with corrections marked. Yes, it's true, your grammar is pretty bad. On the other hand, I don't doubt that the passage would be understood readily enough by any native speaker of Spanish. Your method of learning — i.e., by conversing with a native speaker rather than studying books — may not be the best way to learn to speak grammatically correct, educated-sounding Spanish, but it probably is the best way to learn how to communicate easily with native speakers. If I ever do get to converse with a native speaker myself, I'll surely have to ask him to speak very slowly, otherwise I won't understand.

I look forward to hearing more about Juan.

One error you made repeatedly was in the placement of the object pronoun. The object pronoun (le, la, lo, les, las, los, se, te, me, nos, os) always precedes the verb, except when the form of the verb is the infinitive, the present participle or the imperative. In

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these cases the object pronoun follows (14) the verb and is combined with it as one word.

Thus: le miro a él — I look at him
la miro a ella — I look at her
nos miran — they look at us
me miro — I look at myself
etc.

But infinitive { Es imposible mirarla — It is impossible to look at her
No pueden mirarnos — They cannot look at us

present participles { Estoy mirándole — I am looking at him

singular Mírale } → look at him (familiar imperative)
plural Miradle }

sing Mírela } → look at her (polite imperative)
pl. Mírenla }

But with the negative imperative, the object pronoun again precedes the verb. (also, the negative imperative always uses the subjunctive form):

sing fam — No le mires
pl fam — No le miréis
sing polite — No le mire
pl polite — No le miren
} do not look at him

Also, in the construction with "Que ---" meaning "let --- ", the object pronoun precedes the verb

Que lo quiebren — let them break it
Que os besen — let them kiss you (pl. familiar)
Que se arroje en el lago. — Let him go jump in the lake

Note: this is the "let" that denotes command, not the "let that denotes permission.

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But these could also be written without the "Que";

Arrójese en el lago. Let him go jump in the lake.

And with the "Que" omitted this is handled like an imperative, with the object pronoun tacked onto the end of the verb.

Finally, when there is an auxiliary verb, not in the infinitive, present participle, or imperative form, the object pronoun can either precede the auxiliary verb, or be tacked onto the end of the infinitive or present participle of the main verb, thus;

No nos pueden mirar
No pueden mirarnos } They cannot look at us

Le estoy mirando
Estoy mirándole } I am looking at him

No deben ofenderte
No te deben ofender } they must not offend thee

Le voy a asestar una coz en el culo
Voy a asestarle una coz en el culo } I am going to give him a kick in the ass

Comienzan a pagarnos
Nos comienzan a pagar } they are beginning to pay us.

About 400 years ago or so, this rule about the placement of the object pronoun was apparently not well developed, cause

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in stuff that I've read from that (16)
period, these rules are often violated. Also, in modern writing, especially of a high-toned literary type, they occasionally follow the archaic custom of putting the object pronoun at the end of a verb; this is supposedly done for "stylistic reasons". Thus: Danle un lápiz — they give him a pencil. But I always avoid doing this because, in the first place, it isn't done very often anyway, and in the second place, I don't know under what circumstances this practice would be considered to enhance the "style".

Apparently there are some local dialects where they still follow sometimes the archaic practice of putting the object pronoun at the end of the verb, as in Danle un lápiz.

Thanks for your kind offers of assistance.

I have a copy of the book Colloquial Spanish; which explains the colloquial or informal use of many words or phrases; I don't use it much, but you might have more use for it than I do. If you want it, let me know, and I'll send it to you.

When I send you a Quiroga story for your birthday, would you prefer to have it in English or Spanish?

Yes, you may send me a book for my birthday. Thank you.

Ted

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